

Proposed Tulare Adult School cuts blasted

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Several community members expressed their displeasure with possible Tulare Adult School cuts at the Tulare Joint Union High School District trustees meeting Thursday.

After hearing multiple citizen comments, trustees decided to table their decision regarding the adult school until their next board meeting.

Possible cuts and money saved include:

- Releasing all part-time certificated staff: \$500,000
 - Closing the welding program: \$120,500
 - Eliminating one office clerk position: \$43,500
 - Eliminating evening supervision: \$12,400
- Victoria Chavez, 37, was one of several people who spoke to trustees Thursday, all of whom were in favor of keeping all of the adult school programs intact. Chavez never attended high school and went to the adult school at age 30 to further her education and obtain her GED, she said. About five-years later, she had a job with the U.S. Treasury Department, after graduating from California State University, Fresno. "The adult school can change people's lives," Chavez said. "It sure has changed my life." Lori Riezebos said her brother, for whom she is a conservator, attends the Tulare Adult School's adult activity program, where he learns skills such as cooking and sewing. The program's cancellation would "devastate him," she said. "That's what he looks forward to every day," she said, crying. Some came from as far as Pixley to express their concerns with the possibility of Tulare Adult School programs being cut there. Wayne Clark, a former Pixley Union Elementary School District administrator, said the Tulare Adult School's efforts in Pixley are important. "I have seen it over and over again, when children see their parents going back into education, it makes a

world of difference," Clark said. After the public comment portion of the meeting, board of trustees president Steven Lessley said, "there are no villains here." "The economy is the villain," Lessley said. "... we try to do what's fair and equitable." Once the Tulare Adult School item came up for discussion, board members tabled the item. Trustees thanked everyone who made comments regarding the adult school. "I appreciate the turn out. It tells me your hearts are in the right place," said trustee Craig Hamilton. "I hope you understand our hearts are in the right place as well. ... Every single word spoken tonight, in regards to our programs, I know will be taken to heart." Superintendent Howard Berger said after the meeting that it's the state budget problems that are forcing the district to make tough decisions. No adult school cuts have been finalized, and there is room for changes, he said. "As [Lessley] said, they are looking at everything," Berger said.

What's next

The Tulare Joint Union High School District will hold a public hearing regarding its budget at 7:30 p.m. June 17. The district may hold special board meetings before that, but none are currently scheduled.

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